

CITY OF MUSKEGON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 5, 2020

S. Radtke called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: A. Riegler, S. Radtke, K. George, L. Wood, T. Emory, K. Panozzo

MEMBERS ABSENT: T. Painter, excused

STAFF PRESENT: J. Pesch, R. Cummins

OTHERS PRESENT: None

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

This was postponed until the next meeting due to the need to adjust to the new format of remote electronic meetings. A motion to delay this agenda item was made by S. Radtke, supported by L. Wood and unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 3, 2020 was made by L. Wood, supported by K. Panozzo and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Case 2020-06 – 1140 Terrace St (Garage Door). Applicant: Tim Sikkenga (Sikkenga Construction). District: McLaughlin. Current Function: Residential. J. Pesch presented the staff report. The applicant is seeking approval to replace the wood garage door with a new, 8' x 7' insulated, steel garage door.

T. Emory arrived at 4:10 pm.

A. Riegler asked if the existing garage door could be better replicated with a new door that is closer in design than the proposed replacement door, and noted that the existing garage door appears to be original. K. Panozzo asked if the existing door was a wood door and J. Pesch stated that it was, and has been in place since at least 1984, based on documentation.

K. Panozzo stated that the orientation of the panels on the proposed door would cause it to appear as a taller door than the existing one. L. Wood stated that she did not have a problem with the proposed door. S. Radtke asked if it would be difficult to find a replacement door with asymmetrical panels similar to the existing three panel door instead of the proposed 4x4-panel replacement door. A. Riegler stated that in order to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards

for Rehabilitation the garage door would need to be replaced with a garage door very similar to what is existing, or with something completely different, and that she considered the garage door a secondary architectural component due to its location. S. Radtke noted that, around the city, there were several similar garages with clerestory windows on the sides of them and that they were an architectural oddity in Muskegon. He asked if it might be worthwhile to see if there were other examples that might have the existing garage door to verify if this one was original. The board discussed other properties they knew of with similar garages.

A. Riegler stated that the proposed door resembled a Victorian stable door and did not fit with the style and era of the house and K. Panozzo concurred. A. Riegler stated that using a door of a different style, like the proposed door, would create historical conjecture, which is in violation of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. J. Pesch stated that documentation dated construction of the house to 1909, and fire insurance maps showed that the house was built between 1911 and 1950, noting that there was a large gap in the years the maps were available. A. Rielger asked if both the house and the garage appeared in the maps. J. Pesch stated that the nothing appeared on the 1911 map but both were shown on the 1950 map, and that he did not have documentation proving that the house and the garage were constructed at different times.

S. Radtke stated that the photo showed a hinged door which dated the door to the late 1930s or early 1940s; earlier doors were often solid and were opened in one piece or folded back along the sides. Not knowing when the garage was built made it more difficult to determine if the door was original or a replacement. A. Riegler stated that the proposed garage door would not have matched any of the styles discussed. T. Emory stated that she thought the doors would have only had two panels, differing from the proposed door.

L. Wood asked if the proposed door would be stained to look like wood. K. George stated that the door would be white to match the house. A. Riegler stated that she would rather see a simpler door with raised panels and simple details. Radtke stated that, in order to approve a garage door that was simpler in style, the board would need to decline the current motion, then make a new motion, or the board could deny the request and ask that the applicant return with an alternate option. J. Pesch stated that, due to the date the application was received and City of Muskegon Historical Preservation Ordinance, May 5th, 2020 was the end of the 60 days allotted to the HDC to make a ruling before the case was automatically approved. K. George agreed that the proposed door was not an appropriate style, but that she could have the contractor send an alternative style to Staff for approval if the board were to grant Staff that ability for this case.

A. Riegler presented one option for a simpler replacement door that she thought would be more appropriate and mentioned that it could have lites or be a solid door. L. Wood stated that she did not have a problem with the door the applicant initially requested to install. A motion that the HDC approve the request to replace the wood garage door with a new, 8' x 7' insulated, steel garage door in the style presented in the May 5th, 2020 HDC Staff Report as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by L. Wood, supported by K. Panozzo and denied with L. Wood voting aye, and K. Panozzo, S. Radtke, A. Riegler, and T. Emory voting nay. K. George abstained from voting due to her connection to the project.

A motion that the HDC approve replacement of the existing, wood garage door with a new steel insulated garage door of the same size with either simple, raised panels or plain shaker panels in a 3x4, 12-panel or 4x4 16-panel configuration, with or without windows, as long as the work meets all zoning requirements and the necessary permits are obtained was made by A Riegler and supported by K. Panozzo. An amendment to the motion to allow Staff to approve a similar design to what is recommended in the motion was made by S. Radtke and supported by T. Emory. The motion and amendment were approved with T. Emory, K. Panozzo, S. Radtke, A. Riegler voting aye, and L. Wood voting nay. K. George abstained from voting due to her connection to the project.

Case 2020-07 – 170 Washington Avenue (Solar Panels). Applicant: Peter Denicola (Power Home Solar). District: Campus. Current Function: Residential. J. Pesch presented the staff report. The applicant is seeking approval to install nine (9) roof-mounted solar modules on the roof of the house. Two (2) panels will be installed on the west-facing roof surface, and seven (7) panels will be installed on the east-facing roof surface. Drawings showing the specific locations of the solar panels and the installation method were provided.

S. Radtke stated that while he admired the goal of installing solar panels, he was concerned that most of the panels were on the most visible corner of the façade. A. Riegler stated that, while a flat roof with a parapet would allow the modules to be mostly screened from view, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation explicitly recommend against the type of installation proposed. S. Radtke noted that the request was one of the first times the HDC has had this issue, and the board should be careful about setting a precedent; he recommended possibly installing the modules in a less visible location like on the back of the house or the garage.

K. George stated that the south facing roof surface is where the solar panels would be most effective, but that would be the front of the house. S. Radtke asked if the south-facing façade was the side of the house facing the neighbor's house or the front. J. Pesch stated that solar panels are proposed for the south side of the east-facing roof surface, which faces the neighbor's house. S. Radtke asked if the solar panels could instead be installed on the north side of the east-facing roof surface, behind the dormer, so they would be less visible from Washington Avenue. J. Pesch stated that he thought the dormer may cast a shadow on the panels if they were moved to the north half of the east-facing roof surface. K. George stated that the roof is very unique, and the panels would be visually interruptive in nearly any location due to the property's location at the convergence of three streets.

J. Pesch stated that no local standards applied to solar panels or mechanical equipment and that the closest local regulation was in the Staff Approval form which contained information about the location of air conditioning units. S. Radtke asked to plan for a discussion at a future meeting to discuss mechanical equipment and asked Staff to research other communities' local standards on mechanical equipment installation. J. Pesch stated that it would be possible.

A motion that the HDC deny the request to install nine (9) roof-mounted solar modules on the roof of the house with two (2) panels on the west-facing roof surface, and seven (7) panels on the east-facing roof surface to the location and installation specifications provided in the May 5th, 2020 HDC Staff Report was made by A. Riegler and supported by L. Wood – discussion followed.

A. Riegler cited #1 on page four of the HDC's local standards: "Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing buildings or structures shall not be discouraged when such alterations and/or additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material or features, and so long as such new design is compatible with the size, scale, material, and character of the property, site, district, or environment" as the reason for denial. She also stated that the work was in violation of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The motion was unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

J. Pesch stated that he was still working on the State Historic Preservation Office's application for the City of Muskegon to become a Certified Local Government.

OTHER BUSINESS

K. George pointed out that the garage in Case 2020-7 was very similar to the garage in Case 2020-6.

Time was allotted for public comment with contact information provided. There were no comments from the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

JP